

# Advanced Pedagogy and Course Design Workshop

## *Cutting Edge Teaching Techniques and Strategies for Pluralistic Economists*

**Facilitator:** Geoffrey Schneider, Professor of Economics, Director of Bucknell University Teaching & Learning Center

**Date:** Monday, January 2, 2014, 11:00am-5:00pm

**Location:** La Salle University, Philadelphia, PA

**Registration Fee:** \$50. To register, send your name, contact information, and a check for \$50 payable to:

**Teaching and Learning Center; Bertrand Library; Bucknell University; 1 Dent Drive, Lewisburg, PA 17837**

Note that you must submit the \$50 registration fee to be guaranteed a spot in the workshop—space is limited and will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis. Lunch, snacks and coffee are included in the registration fee.

**Scholarships:** Scholarships are available for graduate students and for untenured faculty who do not have financial assistance to attend the workshop. Scholarships in the amount of \$125 are available to cover workshop registration and expenses related to attending the workshop (lodging, travel). These scholarships are being provided by heterodox organizations, including URPE, AFEE, AFIT, and ASE, to their members. A few scholarships are available to unaffiliated graduate students thanks to support from the Heterodox Economics Newsletter. To apply for a scholarship, please register for the workshop and include in your submission a letter of application including your name, email address, reason for requesting a scholarship, employment status (year in graduate school and expected date of completion, or year and location of employment) and whether or not you are a member of any of the heterodox associations listed above. Preference will be given to graduate students in their last two years of graduate school and visiting or untenured professors. Note that those receiving a scholarship will receive a check for \$125 upon completion of the workshop, but no funds will be available prior to that point.

**Overview:** Most heterodox economists today end up working at teaching-oriented institutions. Thus, our success in the academy often depends significantly on our ability to teach successfully. This workshop is structured for heterodox graduate students and new faculty to give them a comprehensive background in advanced pedagogical techniques and strategies that will help them succeed in the classroom. Drawing on the latest pedagogical research, the workshop will cover constructing and meeting learning objectives, syllabus design, assessment, models for pluralistic teaching, active and collaborative learning techniques, and teaching controversial topics.

**10:30-11:00 Check in; Pick up materials; Initial workshop activity**

## **I. Course design (11:00)**

### **Designing first day activities: establishing Customs, Connections, Community and Curiosity**

The first day of class sets the tone for the whole semester, and it is an opportunity to begin building the kind of classroom environment that you want. Participants will engage in a group activity modeling good first day activities, discuss best practices, and work on constructing their own activity that connects with their course material and that facilitates productive classroom interactions.

### **Constructing sophisticated, assessable learning objectives for an engaging, well-organized course**

Often the first thing that tenure and job search committees look at is your syllabus and its learning objectives. A well-organized course contains a coherent focus with sophisticated course-level learning objectives. Learning objectives should include the big ideas of the course, they should define what students should learn to *do* (e.g., solve a particular type of problem; understand the economic issues in a newspaper) and at what depth students should understand things. A course should also be broken down into objectives for major assignments which can be assessed. Participants will hear about best practices in constructing learning objectives and will construct some for their courses.

### **Course rules vs. a Welcoming Syllabus**

We are often told that a syllabus is our “contract” with the students. If we don’t have an iron-clad syllabus, we open ourselves up to students taking advantage of us. But many syllabi are lifeless and hectoring, written for the

few bad apples instead of the many good students. We'll work on creating a welcoming syllabus that also protects us from problem students. We'll also consider designing a syllabus that serves as a useful study guide for students. This is important for pedagogical purposes and because constructing a welcoming syllabus can be quite useful for the job market and for the tenure process.

### **Meeting learning objectives: exams, papers and assignments that facilitate learning**

We all use exams, papers, assignments and other techniques for assessing how well students meet our learning objectives, but they can be dry and formulaic. We will work on constructing exams and assignments that actually help students learn material, and design rubrics and test blueprints to facilitate learning, to make grading easier and more systematic, and to satisfy departmental assessment requirements.

### **Models for pluralistic teaching and teaching controversial topics**

Teaching heterodox material in the classroom can be complicated in that we sometimes face hostile colleagues or students. There are different methods for teaching heterodox economics, such as a heterodox-focused course, a multi-paradigmatic approach, or an implicitly pluralistic approach to the subject matter. Each of these comes with different opportunities and challenges. We will discuss the various approaches and determine which one suits our teaching environment and our personal style. We will also explore some classic strategies for teaching material that may seem quite controversial to many students. It is important for heterodox economists to frame material so that they are seen as open-minded and fair.

## **II. Roundtable: Teaching environments facing pluralistic economists (2:00, over lunch)**

**Invited guest speakers talk about their experiences teaching heterodox economics. Panelists will include: Paddy Quick, St. Francis College, and others.**

Roundtable participants will offer advice for new teachers of heterodox economics. They will discuss the challenges they have faced as teachers, both from colleagues and from students, and share some of their most effective teaching strategies. After the panelists finish brief presentations, we will have an open discussion.

## **III. Classroom interactions (3:00)**

### **Active Learning Techniques for Economics Classes**

At teaching institutions today, the focus is on active, student-centered learning. We will focus on some classic active learning techniques to make the classroom more lively and to get students more engaged in the course material.

### **Collaborative Learning Exercises for Economics Classes**

Some of the most exciting and innovative classroom exercises involve collaborative learning. During this part of the workshop, participants will learn about and experience collaborative learning exercises designed for use in economics classes. They will begin adapting some cutting edge collaborative learning techniques for their own classes.

### **5:00 Wrap Up and Workshop Evaluation**

**About the workshop leader:** Geoffrey Schneider received a BA from Northwestern University and a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is currently a Professor of Economics and Director of the Teaching and Learning Center at Bucknell University. He has co-authored two textbooks, *Introduction to Political Economy* and *Economics: A Tool for Critically Understanding Society*, and authored or co-authored articles in the *Journal of Economic Issues*, *The Review of Social Economy*, *The Review of Radical Political Economics*, *The Forum for Social Economics*, and *Feminist Economics*. He is an award-winning teacher, author of several articles on pedagogy, and guest editor of two special issues of the *Forum for Social Economics* on Teaching Heterodox Economics.